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there actually the highest, so that a great man arriving from East Malekula finds to his disgust that most young men, and even boys, are there invested with honours which it has taken him, in his own home, a lifetime to acquire.[1]

On Vao the older men are all *Melteg*, within which rank there are a number of yet higher supernumerary grades conferring yet higher distinction which will be referred to on p. 432.

Lavishness of the Rite

The comparative simplicity of the Small Island Maki with regard to the number of ranks is, on the other hand, balanced by an immense increase in the number of rites, and by the great length of time they take to perform. This increase is seen also both in the quality and the quantity of tusked boars that are sacrificed, a number which on occasion rises to several hundred at a time.

For, though only one "line," consisting of members of one matrilineal moiety within the patrilocal village, performs at one time, each member of this moiety is the son of a member of the other moiety, and family solidarity sees to it that both moieties combine to pool resources. In this way, the whole wealth of an entire village is contributed lavishly towards the performance of every detail of the rite. In spite of the number of years, roughly a generation, which it takes to perform the rite, each man whose life is not cut short has the opportunity of participating at least twice, or, if he is lucky, three or even four times. For it is a point of honour that the rite shall be carried through as speedily as possible, so that rise in rank may be swift and its performance by the opposing "line" composed of members of the other matrilineal moiety (which in this patrilocal community at the same time includes the next generation) shall not be unduly delayed.

EVE OF THE RITE
RECKONING BY "NIGHTS" INSTEAD OF "DAYS"

There is only one more subject to mention before proceeding to an account of the special rites connected with the Vao Maki. This is the period covered in the native mind by what we speak of as a "day." Modern Europe regards the twenty-four-hour period we call a "day" as extending from midnight to midnight. This is a purely artificial convention, since there is no obvious natural phenomenon occurring at these moments to show us that they have arrived. Moreover, we tend to regard the night as a period of recuperation after the day, and consequently in practice think of the twenty-four-hour period as starting either at dawn or

[1] A somewhat similar state of affairs is reported by Codrington from Gaua in Santa Maria, where "boys begin high up, so that a Gaua boy often ranks with a grey-haired Mota man" (Codrington, 3, p. 105).

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at whatever time it is our habit to rise, and therefore refer to the whole period, including the night, as a "day." The native, having no clocks, perforce judges the passage of the diurnal period by means of striking natural phenomena. Unlike ourselves, however, he tends to regard the night as a preparation for the day. This is particularly evident on the major ritual occasions, which are always preceded by an all-night dance beginning at sunset. Moreover, he is not usually an early riser. He therefore chooses sunset as the beginning of things, and consequently calls the twenty-four-hour cycle embracing both night and day a "night." The Vao word for this is *bong*, which also means "darkness" and is used as an adjective meaning "black" and as a name for black paint.

Variants of the same word are used with the same meaning throughout Malekula, and are used also in a special sense to mean "*the* day (or night)" on which any particular rite is to take place or has taken place. The word thus covers a multitude of meanings. We have no such word, and can only translate this use of it by such expressions as "date," "feast-day," "day (or night) on which a given rite is performed." Any occasion of ritual importance is called a *bong*, but there is a yet more particular meaning which confines the use of the word as an official designation to those important dates which do not precede but follow the high spots of native ritual. Thus, in any of the ritual cycles the dates of important events leading up to the culminating rite depend largely on the state of preparedness of the interested parties, whether they have ready a sufficient number of pigs, yams, and so on, and, though they may be referred to in ordinary speech as *bong*, each has its own particular name. Once the culminating event is over, however, the dates for the subsequent rites are for the most part strictly and immutably fixed, and these dates are themselves the names by which the rites are officially known. Thus we get dates such as *bong e-lim*, "the Fifth Day" (after the culminating rite), *bong movul ghe-tol*, "the Thirtieth Day," etc.[1]

This method of reckoning by nights rather than days leads to certain difficulties in the recording of native rites. In the first place, it involves translating the word *bong*, properly used for "night," in this kind of context by the English word "day."

A second, more serious, source of possible error in transcribing the course of events which the recorder has not personally seen arises from the practice of preceding important rites by the performance of an all-night dance, a practice which itself may be partly responsible for the choice of the word "night" to designate the whole twenty-four-hour period. Thus, an informant, having given an account of daylight

[1] In the ritual accompanying childbirth they date from the moment of birth. In Initiation they date from the sacrifice of incision, and in the Maki and its cognate rites from the culminating sacrifice which is at the same time the moment of re-birth. In the case of mortuary rites they date from the day of burial.

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proceedings, may add as an afterthought "at night they perform such and such a dance." The recorder not accustomed to the native method of reckoning might very well record this as taking place on the night after the main rite, whereas in fact it occurred the night before. To obviate this source of error, and at the same time to preserve the native method of reckoning, I have therefore adopted throughout this work the terminology used by our own forefathers at a time when we also counted the twenty-four-hour period as beginning at sunset, and which we still use in such expressions as New Year's Eve, and will refer to all such evening or all-night dances as taking place on the Eve of the rite in question.

THE DOLMEN-MAKI

The following description refers exclusively to the Maki as now performed in the double-village of Pete-hul and Togh-vanu which together form the Superior Side of the Island. This form of the rite is that which has been referred to above as the dolmen-Maki, a name derived from the use of a single large dolmen in the first part of the rite. Though the villages on the Inferior Side of the Island no longer perform it, having recently adopted new forms of Maki from Atchin, nevertheless until quite recently they did, and it is for this reason that I also refer to this rite as the Vao Maki.

It must not be supposed that what I am about to give is even approximately a complete account. Such an account dealing with so protracted a rite, bound up as it is with every aspect of native culture, could never be written. The songs themselves would fill a volume and the description of dances another, its economic aspect would fill a third, and its relations with the whole social structure a fourth, to say nothing of its underlying religious and psychological significance.

All I can attempt to do here is to give a brief outline of those aspects of the rite which I was able to record during a short spell of field-work, supplemented by such observations of a general nature as have already been made, and hope that this will serve to give some idea as to its structure and the sequence of events.[1]

[1] All the information regarding the ritual of the Maki on Vao is of my own recording, my chief informant being Ma-taru of Tolamp. Godefroy for some reason makes no mention whatever of the rite apart from the information already quoted regarding tusked boars and a few casual remarks which will be acknowledged where they occur. This does not mean, however, that he in any way minimised the importance of the rite, for it appears from information kindly supplied by his brother M. l'Abbé A. Godefroy, in a letter dated December 22nd, 1936, that he regarded it with reverence as a "mystère." M. l'Abbé writes: "Listening to his talk, one understood how much importance the natives of Vao attached to it. Sometimes he would begin to speak of it, but deeming us, I suppose, not sufficiently initiated, he withdrew into himself and withheld any detailed explanations." Godefroy himself at one time entertained serious thoughts of entering the Carmelite order and practised many of its injunctions without actually becoming a member. His opinion is therefore worth having, and it is to be regretted that he has left no record of the spiritual aspects of the rites that led him to hold them in such esteem.

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of five or ten days over a protracted period, with a general release of mourning taboos ending as a rule on the 100th day but sometimes lasting till the 1000th. This method of reckoning days in multiples of ten is so marked a feature of mortuary ritual that such numbers (with the exception of 30, due to the phases of the moon), and particularly 100, are almost invariably found throughout this area to be connected somehow or other with death. In Malekula and the Small Islands it is closely connected (as we have already seen) with the monolith-Maki, but much less so with the dolmen-Maki such as is practised on Vao. It is presumably for this reason that it is less prominent on Vao than elsewhere.

There are, however, certain movable feasts that in no area fit in with this decimal reckoning. Most notable among these is the rite called *Matean*, which is the Vao form of the word meaning literally "Death Feast." Rites bearing this name have been recorded from various parts of Malekula, dialectical variations being *ni-mesian* in Seniang,[1] *ni-masian* in Lambumbu [2] and, in the Small Islands, *metsen* in Atchin. A case is reported by Deacon in which the rite was performed in Lambumbu on the day after burial. In Seniang the date is variable, the feast in one case being held five days after the corpse was laid on the stretcher. These are but minor variations, for on Atchin the rite, there carried out on a most spectacular scale, may be performed as late as two years after death. It is, moreover, not unusual in the Small Islands for a great man to have it performed before his death so that he may himself take part in his own mortuary rites and make sure that they are correctly performed. One such occurrence on Vao has already been referred to on p. 236. I myself recorded others from Atchin.[3] Some of the more spectacular aspects of the later forms of the rite have already begun to be acquired by the Inferior Side of Vao by purchase from Atchin. To such an extent has this form of the rite become ritually degraded in the interests of display that during my visit three old men belonging to the village of Singon on this side of Vao "made *metsen*" (the Atchin form of the rite) together at one and the same time. This was done on account of the extreme expense involved, not only in the actual feasts given, but also in the payment due to the sellers. The more important aspects of the rite had been purchased some time before, but the old men had still not bought the right to dance the Atchin dance called *Wenen*. This they now did. The sellers were the adult members of the village of Emil Parav on the Inferior Side of Atchin, who came in a body to teach the dance and its accompanying songs. As often happens, there was a dispute over the price paid, and the sellers returned home to Atchin highly dissatisfied with the pigs they had

[1] Deacon, 4, p. 525.
[2] Ibid., 4, pp. 566-7.
[3] Thus also in Matanavat a man "may yet live long after the death feast . . . (after which) he will rest and be ready easily to die. . . . The pigs have made ready his path of the spirit and opened the road of hereafter past the hungry devil Le-sev-sev, who waits there seeking to eat those who cannot give pigs" (Harrisson, 2, p. 58).

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for such and such a small pig." The giving of these yams is called *ra vangani ghoagh*, "we return food for the pigs." The Speaker then announces that they may take the yams that have been placed ready for them, and they depart, the yams they have been given being roughly equal in size and quality to those that they have brought.

Anniversary Communion. *Hulhuluan*

There remains only the annual communion rite celebrated on the anniversary of the old man's death, held every year so long as the memory of him is kept alive. The anniversary day is called *Simbean*, and the feast *Hulhuluan*. The day of the moon on which he died is remembered, and the moon itself is recognised by whether death occurred at the time of the new yams or the season of the *na-viho* fruit tree or some such natural event connected with the native calendrical system.

On the anniversary itself there are three communion rites, the first and last with a pudding, and the second and central rite of the whole proceeding with a kava root (*malogh*). Kava is not drunk in the Small Islands (though it is said to be by the Big Nambas in the interior of the mainland), but it is used on various occasions during the Maki and also for magic. So far as I know, this is the only occasion on which it is placed in the mouth. The tenor of the petitions offered by the living to the deceased after the communion is that the latter may do them no harm, protect them from evil and give them increase in pigs.

Only the men of the dead man's Quarter take part in this rite, though a general feast for the whole Side of the Island is made on the following day.

Morning communion with pudding. Petitions to dead man.

On the morning of the anniversary a small pudding is made by the men of the dead man's Quarter in their Lodge. When cooked, it is taken out of the oven and cut up into small pieces. Each man holds a piece in his hand, with which to communicate. No one says "*Ghire*" as is done on other occasions, because they are seated so close together as to make it unnecessary. They watch one another, and at one moment each bites off a morsel, saying "*Na . . . long . . . ki*," "The pudding," drawing the word out. Then the presiding man offers a petition to the dead man, beginning always with the customary formula "*Ta-mat wurogh*," "Ghost, stay quiet," with which all communion prayers begin.[1] As an example of the petitions offered on this occasion my informant gave the

[1] The same formula is uttered every time a yam-pudding (*na-longk*) is eaten, as a kind of grace. The same holds true of the Banks Islands, of which Codrington (3, p. 271) says, "At ordinary meals when the oven is opened a bit of food is put aside for the dead, with the words 'This is for you, let our oven be well cooked.'"